

Question on Notice
No. 420
Asked on 24 March 2005

MISS SIMPSON asked the Premier and Minister for Trade (MR BEATTIE) -

QUESTION:

With reference to letters written by the Prime Minister to all Premiers requesting that the restriction on embryos for research (to those created before 5 April 2002) be extended for a year to allow governments to consider the review of the embryo research legislation due to report in December 2005 and in view of this week's announcement of a world first breakthrough in adult stem cell research by Queensland's very own Griffith University showing that adult stem cells have the potential to make embryo research obsolete, and as the principal researcher, Professor Alan Mackay-Sim, was appointed by the Premier/Queensland Government as Queenslander of the Year in 2003—

Will he stand by the work of his Smart State scientists and agree to an extension of the restriction on embryos while the results of this advance in stem cell technology and its implications can be evaluated by the review committee?

ANSWER:

In 2002 the Council of Australian Governments agreed to ban human cloning and establish a three year moratorium on the use of certain excess Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) embryos created after 5 April 2002 for regulated research. The purpose of the moratorium was to enable the development of an ethical and licensing framework for strict oversight of approved research on certain excess ART embryos. As these oversight mechanisms are now in place, there is no need to continue the moratorium beyond the agreed end date of 5 April 2005 and the Prime Minister has agreed not to extend the moratorium.

The Queensland Government supports the current research at Griffith University and in June 2003 under the Smart State Research Fund provided \$12m funding for the Institute for Cellular & Molecular Therapies to develop a research facility which will house Professor Mackay-Sim's group.